



Transforming an Intractable Conflict by the Multi-Track Diplomacy Approach: Application to the Taiwan Strait Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The primary cause was the control of Chinese territory. The two political groups in Taiwan (Chinese Nationalist Party or KMT and the Democratic Progressive Party or DPP) and China are the main actors whereas Japan and the United States are the secondary actors. The conflict has escalated into war, crises and unstable peace with 4 main climaxes. The initial issue was the sovereignty dispute over China and Chinese people in both territories of the mainland China and the island of Taiwan. Due to the de-Sinification and the Taiwanisation policies as well as divergent socio-political and economic developments, the issue has evolved into cultural and political identity issue creating 3 identifiers: few Chinese, more Taiwanese and some ‘*Chiwanesse*’.

Peacemaking process: The United States has prevented a reunification war; the tracks 2, 3 and 4 diplomacy have advanced the economic interdependence and social interactions with no political reunification.

Policy recommendations: all the actors (China, KMT, DPP and US) need to change their policies, mainly by reviewing the “one China, different interpretations” principle, establishing a trilateral relationship, and supporting Taiwan’s participation into international organizations. This can be achieved by applying all the nine tracts of the multitrack diplomacy (MTD) approach.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since President Ma’s election in 2008, economic and social rapprochements have improved, and political tension has thawed between China and Taiwan. However, the occurrence of some domestic or international unpredictable events can affect the current achievements and deadlock the process. The victory of a DPP candidate during the presidential election with a preference to change the current negotiation pattern is an example. This raises the question of an adequate strategy that can pave the path for a political reunification. This research aims to investigate the applicability of the multitrack diplomacy approach in transforming the conflict for the establishment of both a durable peace and political reunification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the conflict: Lund’s curve
1) Cause: 1949 territorial control . 2) Actors: China and Taiwan (KMT and DPP)+ US and Japan. 3) Dynamics: war, crises and unstable peace; 4 main climaxes (1954-1955; 1958-1959; 1959-1978 and 1995-1996). 4) Issues: Sovereignty + Identity

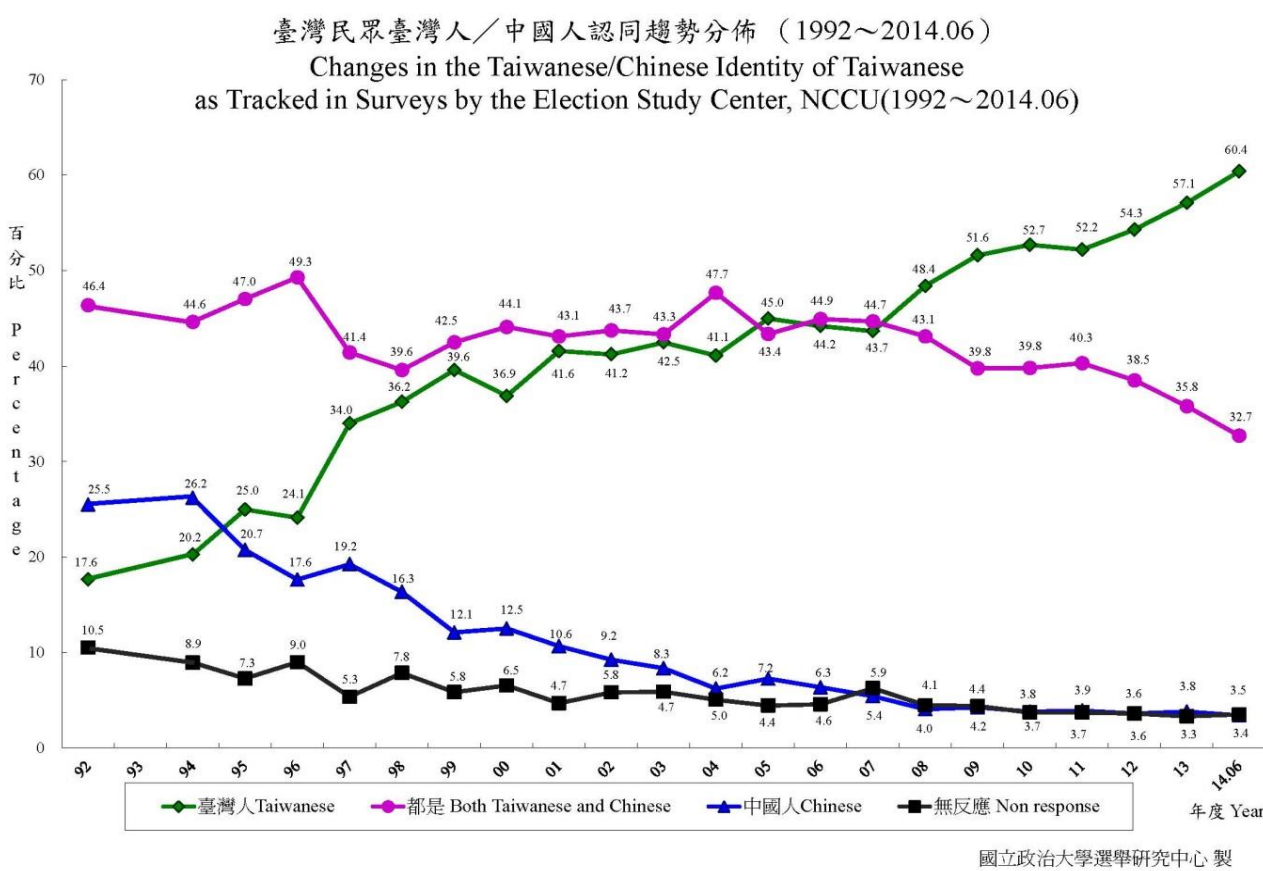


Fig. 1: Ethnic identity in Taiwan (ESC, 2014)
5) Peacemaking: deterrence diplomacy; MTD



Fig.2: MTD diagram (McDonald, 2012:67)
Track 1. Government officials: heads of state never met; no signing of legal documents.
✓ Track 2. Semi-officials: SEF & ARATS; “1 China, different interpretations”
✓ Track 3. Business diplomacy: Taiwan→China
✓ Track 4. Citizen diplomacy: Tourism (Taiwan→China----->Taiwan)
Track 5. Academic exchanges: less intense
Track 6. Activism: protests; Track 7. Religious activities: less intense; Track 8. Funding organizations: (Government, Private donations, Humanitarian aids); Track 9. Communication: few media exchanges

Indicators	China	Taiwan
1 State identity	8	10
2 Election (free and fair)	1	10
3 Freedom of expression	2	9
4 Separation of powers	1	10
5 Civil rights	2	10
6 Independent judiciary	2	10
7 Democratic institutions	1	9
8 Party system	1	9
9 Approval of democracy	n/a	9
10 Socioeconomic barriers	5	10

Fig. 3: Divergent development (BIT, 2014)

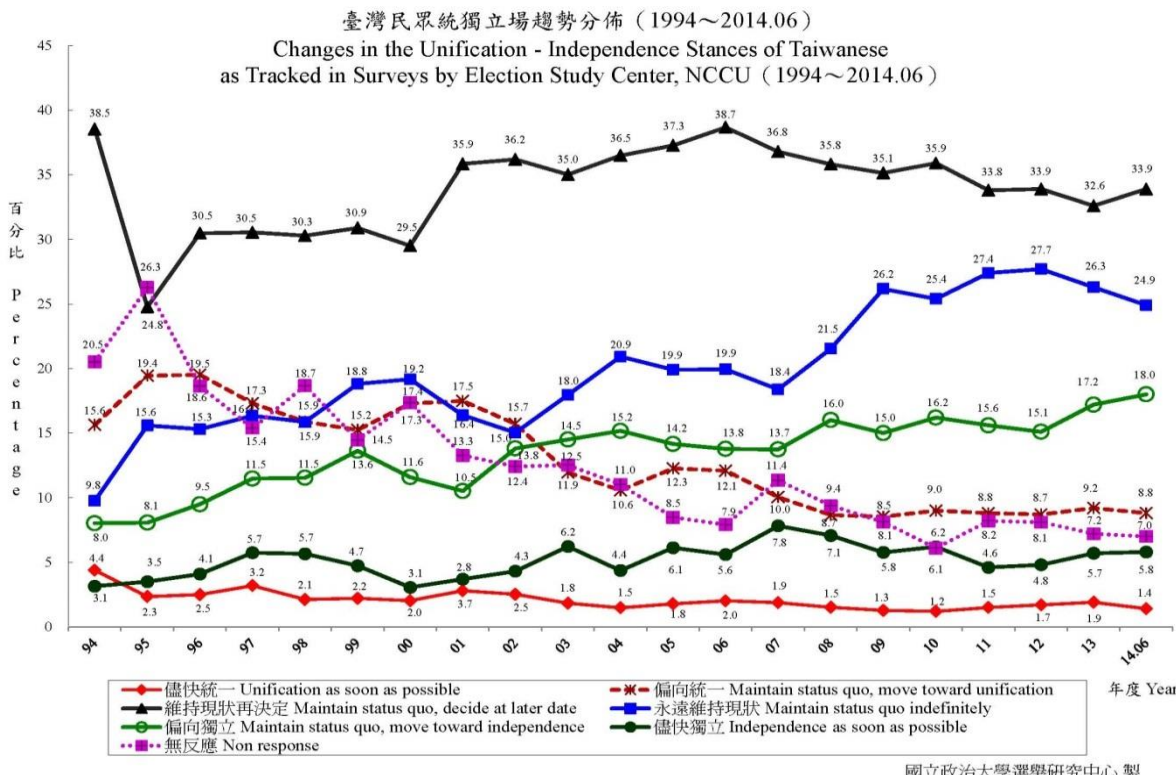


Fig 4: Position on Taiwan’s Status (ESC, 2014)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Conflict transformation & MTD

Issues transformation: promote Chinese identity in Taiwan=political transformation; Taiwan’s membership, trust building
Actors transformation: impartiality of US; pragmatism of political leaders within the CCP, KMT and DPP.
Relationship transformation: trilateral relation between China-US-Taiwan.
Rule transformation: Policy change=“1 China, 2 interpretations” principle
Structural transformation: valorization of the impacts of China’s rise.

CONCLUSION

The shifts in the issues underlying the conflict, the inefficiency of the conflict management mechanism and the divergent political patterns followed by China and the Taiwan are among the factors that have contributed to the intractability of the Taiwan Strait conflict. In the light of the findings of the research, a resolution of the conflict leading to a perpetual peace agreement is hard to reach; even if it is achieved, there is no guarantee for future political reunification. I recommend the application of all the nine tracts of the multitrack diplomacy approach which could favorably contribute to transform the conflict.

LITERATURE CITED

BTI (Bertelsmann Stiftungg’s transformation index) (2014) “Country report 2014”. www.bti.project.org.
ESC (2014) Election Study Center, N.C.C.U <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166>.
McDonald J.W (2012) “The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy”. Journal of conflictology , 3 (2).

Note: The references list is also attached.